



Hepatitis A Vaccine

What You Need to Know

Deployment Medication Information Sheets (DMIS) are provided by the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM). Written for soldiers and their families, they provide basic information on deployment medications that are intended as guidance only; consult your health care provider for more information.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A can cause a mild flu-like illness, jaundice (yellow skin or eyes), and/or severe stomach pains or diarrhea. People with hepatitis A infection often have to be hospitalized.

How do you get hepatitis A?

- You usually get hepatitis A from drinking water or eating food contaminated by the feces of an infected person. It can easily be passed from one person to another in the same living quarters.
- It is often spread in poor sanitary conditions, in areas of poor hygiene, or after floods or natural disasters.
- You may also get hepatitis A from sexual contact or sharing needles with infected persons.
- It is rarely obtained through blood transfusions.

Who should get the vaccine and how is it given?



The vaccine is given to persons at risk who are over 2 years of age:

- Persons traveling to or working in countries that have high or intermediate rates of hepatitis A.
- Children in communities that have high rates of hepatitis A and periodic hepatitis A outbreaks (e.g., American Indian, Alaska Native).
- Men who have sex with men.
- Illegal-drug users, if historical outbreaks among persons with such risk behaviors.
- Persons who work with hepatitis A virus-infected primates or with hepatitis A virus in a research laboratory setting.
- Persons who have chronic liver disease.
- Persons who have clotting-factor disorders.

Your health care provider will give you the vaccine in two injections, given at least 6 months apart.

What does the military require?

The vaccine is required for all active duty forces for the prevention of hepatitis A during deployment or travel to areas with poor food, water, and sewage sanitation. Since hepatitis A is worldwide, it is required for all deployments.

The hepatitis A vaccine will not protect you from other liver infections such as hepatitis B, C, D, or E.

Are there any side effects?

- The most common side effect is pain or redness at the injection site.
- Sometimes mild fever, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, headache, or weakness occurs. If you have any of these symptoms, and they last more than 2 days or become bothersome, call your health care provider.
- Talk to your health care provider if you have a high fever, breathing trouble, skin rash, dizziness, tingling of the hands or feet, or muscle or joint pain.

Is there any reason I shouldn't get the vaccine?

Tell your health care provider if:

- You have any illnesses, infections, blood disorders, immune system disorders, or allergies.
- You're taking any over-the-counter or prescription medicine, especially steroids or prednisone.

What if I'm pregnant or breast-feeding?

- The vaccine should be given during pregnancy only when clearly needed. Talk to your health care provider about the risks and benefits.
- It is not known if the vaccine appears in breast milk. Consult your health care provider before breast-feeding.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

Children ages 2 to 18 need more than one dose of the vaccine. If a dose is missed for any reason, the missed dose should be taken as soon as possible. The vaccination series should NOT be re-started.

You can avoid getting hepatitis A!

- Get each vaccination as scheduled.
- Practice good hand washing and proper personal hygiene.
- Properly prepare and store foods.
- Use only Veterinary or Preventive Medicine-approved foods, beverages, or water.

Be sure the vaccination is recorded in your medical record.

Where can I get more information?

- Health care provider at your military treatment facility.
- Military Immunizations web page: <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/immunization/vaccines.html>
- CDC Specific Disease web site: www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm
- CDC Vaccine Information web site: www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/default.htm

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